1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

361 The population is comparatively small, and the land available for
● [423] the shifting *penda* cultivation is very extensive. There is practically no individual property in *penda* land, and it is recognized only in permanent rice fields.

361 In comparison, the Bison-horn Maria country is thickly
241 populated; there is far more permanent rice cultivation; much
178 old *penda* land has lost its forest growth, or is getting steadily slower in recuperating it after each time when it is felled and burnt
621 for *penda* cultivation; and each villager likes to have a large *bari* or garden enclosure at the back of his house or in the immediate neighbourhood of the village where he can grow tobacco, maize, chillies, tomatoes and sesamum, and can pen his cattle for the sake of their manure. In consequence, economic considerations now operate in favour of the permanency of Bison-horn Maria villages and against their being shifted; as the pressure on the land has become greater the alternative sites (*padar*), to which in past generations a village was from time to time shifted, have been permanently occupied by hamlets (*para*) of that village, and the settlers in the hamlets have permanently occupied the adjacent *penda* sites once cultivated in rotation by the shifting village. Many big Bison-horn villages have six or seven hamlets, some of which are virtually separate villages, and are beginning to assert a separate identity by having their own headmen and sometimes their own village priests, though on formal occasions all will still gather together at the original *padar* of the village and its hamlets, and acknowledge there the authority of the headman and priest of the parent village. In the Abujhmar hills, moreover, each village is still inhabited almost entirely by members of one clan, and all the lands of the villages are regarded as the lands of the clan. But in the Bison-horn country, though each parish is still said to be the *bhum* (earth) of the clan which first settled there, yet there are generally in the village many houses of other clans and wife-clans, from whom the first settlers and their descendants have taken
[423] wives. Though they will still say that a certain village is the *bhum* of the clan that founded it, yet in consequence of the many representatives of other clans settled there now the village and its lands are not looked on as that clan's property in anything like the same degree as among the Hill Marias, nor in actual fact is the original clan so free to shift the village as it was before it allowed its wife-clans to share its village site and cultivable lands. Often, too, the headman is no longer a member of the settler clan. If,
[166] therefore, a Bison-horn village does shift in these days, the move is probably due to superstitious motives, or to epidemic or epizootic disease.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

CHAPTER VII

AGRICULTURE

THE whole life of the Maria is primarily directed towards the raising of food from the earth, either by cultivation, or by gathering the fruits of the forest, or by fishing, hunting or trapping. His agriculture, as we have seen, determines the sites of his villages, and regulates his relations with his wife. His festivals, it will be seen, are designed either to ensure the benevolence of the earth and the ancestors and the clan-god towards the crops about to be sown, or to celebrate the first eating of each of the main crops, and the final harvest-home, in a spirit of communal thanksgiving. The human population to him is the crop of men that the *Bhum* or Earth raises for the clan, or for the Ruling Chief.

The Hill Maria still regards the crops as the result of the combined labours of the village rather than of the labours of individuals. If one suffers, all suffer, and all combine to support the old and the needy, and to help each fellow villager to get through the heaviest parts of the yearly agricultural round. The young man on marriage, or the fellow clansman settling in the village, must have his share of the village lands for cultivation. In the raising of crops, then, the village and not the individual cultivator is the unit, even now, in the Abujhmar hills. But the Bison-horn Maria is an individualist. He has lived long in contact with semi-Hinduized neighbours, and has long begun to practise the more advanced methods of the settled cultivator. Permanent cultivation fosters individualism. Even in the Abujhmar hills the few permanent rice fields are definitely the private property of individuals; and as the use of the plough spreads and more and more of the wet lands become permanent rice fields, the owners of these fields begin more and more to assert in their shifting cultivation plots the rights of permanent private ownership already admitted in their rice fields. This has already happened among the Bison-horn Marias, aided by the rapid growth of population increasing the pressure on the land and reducing the land available for distribution to newcomers to the villages. The indications are that formerly they shared the communal attitude of the Hill Maria. In describing, therefore, the agricultural life of the community, I shall deal primarily with that of the Hill Marias, indicating where necessary the different developments among the Bison-horn Marias.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

241 805 cultivation, it will be convenient to start this account from the new moon of Phagur, that is to say, the new moon nearest to the end of February, before which it is not considered right to start cutting forest for *penda*, though the work is started two or three weeks earlier for *dippa* cultivation. The choice of the *kaghai* site (see p. 107 above) for the *penda* will have been made beforehand, either in informal discussion among the village elders or at the ceremony after *Koqsar*, the great concluding harvest festival, at which the *kasyeq-gaita* seated on his *udam-garia* seat of honour with the villagers seated around him, confirms by formal pronouncement the decisions probably already reached in informal discussions with the elders about the village arrangements for the coming year.

241 Before the felling of the forest may begin, a further ceremony takes place. I attended the ceremony at Orcha on March 11th, 1934, when the moon of Phagur was nearly full. At about 1 p.m. the *kasyeq-gaita* with the elders proceeded to the selected *kaghai*, which was covered with a dense growth of sapling sal trees; the oldest villager present, a man of about fifty, said that he was a small child when it had last been cultivated. There Usendi Delu, the *kasyeq-gaita*, cleared a small piece of ground at the foot of a *saja* tree, set up a stone on it against a root of the tree, and placed an egg upright on its pointed end in front of the stone. He then squatted on the ground before the stone to the right of the egg, and Usendi Moda, the *gaita* or secular headman, to the left of the egg. Both put their hands together, palm to palm, touched the ground below the egg with them and raised them to their foreheads, uttering in unison the formula, '*Bhum kenji! Talugh kenji! Jimme jaga kenji! Anam pirka a'i, nehna nehna manna a'i!, Kohla pandi! irka gumur hadi!*' (Earth hearken! Mother hearken! All that is here and around hearken! Let our crops and vegetables grow here, let them grow and yield full increase!' Let our *kutki* ripen! Let our cucumbers and pumpkins mature!) They repeated the formula in unison, again saluted the earth in front of the egg, and then arose. The congregation of elders which had squatted around them and kept silence all through the ceremony also arose, and everyone returned to the village, leaving the egg there unbroken. There was no formal felling of the first tree, and no allotment of the different plots of *penda* land.

241 423 From this ceremony onwards all are free to start felling. There is no formal allotment, but villagers divide up the land by mutual discussion, the size of each plot depending on the number of persons in the household to be fed and capable of doing a full day's work with axe and hoe. It is largely a matter of one man volunteering to clear one plot and another man the next, and so on;

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

the preparation of the *kaghai* site is a task to be accomplished by the whole village. Disputes are practically unknown, owing to this strong feeling of community of interest. There is, moreover, in the Abujhmar hills ample land for all, and any man is free to work harder than others if he likes to cultivate a larger plot; but he seldom does so unless he either is a newly married newcomer to the village, bent on building up a reserve of grain, or has a large number of dependents. There is no guarantee that a man will have the same plot as that allotted to him when the *kaghai* was last previously cultivated, or even a plot of the same area; but in villages where land is not so ample as in others, and a *kaghai* may be cultivated therefore at shorter intervals, each man as far as possible is allowed the same plot that he occupied at the previous cutting, though he may have to contribute a part of his former land to accommodate newcomers or newly married youths. There are villages where either the *kasyeq-gaita* or the *gaita* is a strong man and has arrogated to himself a right to allot the *penda* plots; but he would get short shrift if he were unfair in his allotting: he is not a chief, but only *primus inter pares* among the village elders.

Plots once allotted and cultivated are for the time the private property of the householder who cultivates them, and he marks the limits of his cultivation either by leaving certain tree stumps to serve as boundary marks (the Bison-horn Marias who retain permanent rights over their *penda* plots are especially careful about this, the boundary trees often being left intact and not even lopped, save in so far as necessary to keep birds off the *penda*), or by planting lines of roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) or of *til* (*Sesamum indicum*) along the edges of his plot; roselle with its crimson seed-vessels and *til* with its deep yellow blossoms make very vivid boundaries.

Each family fells its own *penda* plots, and the villagers do not combine to clear each plot in turn as they combine in threshing. The work takes two or three weeks, and the men do all the heavy work, though women and children assist in cutting small trees and undergrowth and in arranging them for firing. Any fruit trees are carefully spared. If any of the ground is dug up with *gudari* hoes, men do most of the work, though they leave it to women on the flat *dippa* lands or on the gentler *penda* slopes. The iron *pulu* digging stick is used for grubbing up roots large enough to be a serious impediment. Much timber, when the growth is heavy, is reserved for fencing the *penda* against wild animals, where any herds of deer survive. The wood is left to dry through the heat of April and May, which are holiday months.

When the wood is dry, the *kasyeq-gaita* calls a meeting in the village dormitory to fix a day for firing. All the villagers combine

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

241 In his *mudur erka* (big tree *erka*) he raises *chikma* (*Panicum miliare*), *gatha* (*Panicum frumentaceum*) and *sama*, all crops of the first sowing, ripening by early August, and, as main crops, *mandia* (*Eleusine coracana*) which he calls *gurra*, and *kulthi*, which he, like the Hill Maria, calls *kohala*, both of which ripen with the *penda kulthi* [273] in early December; with him *Eleusine coracana* is an important crop, as he uses it as a principal ingredient in his *landa* intoxicant. In his *marram erka* (brushwood *erka*) he sows only the pulses *urad* (*Phaseolus radiatus*), which he calls *popul*, and *kulthi* (*Glycine hispida* and *Dolichos biflorus*) which he calls *koreng*. The '*os kosra*' millets which the Hill Maria sows as a second crop after the crops reaped in August he calls '*mach kohala*', and sows not only similarly as a second crop, but also as the main crop in his *erka* land for the third and last year of its cultivation, when it is too exhausted to bear anything else.

241 Besides the fact observed on page 128 above that, unlike the Hill Maria, he ploughs the ashes, or digs them with his hoe, into his ● 423 *erka* and *penda* lands, these lands have, therefore, this further great difference from the Hill Maria *penda* lands, that each crop has its own appropriate type of cultivation, and is therefore sown separately, not jumbled up with every other kind of crop in a hopeless welter. He is, moreover, careful to preserve any mango or other fruit trees on his plot. As he retains permanent rights over his plot, whether it is tilth or forest at the moment, he has to be more careful over its boundaries than the Hill Maria, and cannot be content with the temporary sowing of a line of *til* or roselle. At each burning, therefore, he spares important trees or stumps at boundary junctions, which he calls *sarhari* or 'authority' trees, and sometimes he leaves a thin line of trees standing along his boundary when he fells the forest. He generally grows his beans and gourds on these and other trees, not on poles stuck up in the middle of other crops like the Hill Maria.

241 It has been seen that he has always a *bari* garden enclosure [417] round or near his house in the village, which he calls *lon-welung* or 'house fencing', and generally fences with either bamboo wattle-[231] work (*wedur-welung*) or a fence of brushwood tied slantwise between horizontal struts (*jhat-welung*). Here at night he pens his cattle, and the ground is thus richly manured to bear maize (*jonna*), *sarson* or mustard (*tarson*) and tobacco (*pogo*)[1] as essential crops, with in these days frequent patches of chillies, tomatoes and other vegetables. *Sarson* is the most paying crop exported from Bastar,

[1] The Hill Maria grows tobacco and a few poor chillies and tomatoes in little plots left clear of dab grasses when *penda* land is useless for grain.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

over from previous days. The female trees bear fruit in May, and the pulp of this is eaten, generally after roasting the fruit on an earthenware crock and breaking off the rind. They also eat the unripe seeds and seedlings, as well as the roots. They collect the seed and leave it to germinate in pits; they propagate the trees also from root cuttings.

Individual ownership in the trees is to some extent recognized, not necessarily, however, in the owner of the land. There is a sort of village arrangement as to the trees to be tapped by each family, permitting a rough rotation where trees are plentiful, so as to give them a much needed rest from tapping. The Koyas and Dorlas sacrifice a fowl or a goat at the foot of the first tree tapped, and the sacrificial victims are then taken to the Village Mother's shrine and eaten there by the men.

Date-palm

The *sindi* (*Phoenix sylvestris*) is occasionally tapped in the Bison-horn country by making an incision in the bark below the crown of the tree.

The *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) is common everywhere except in the Abujhmar hills, and it is the spirit distilled from it that is sold at the State excise shops, except for a few toddy shops around Konta. There is very little illicit distillation, the State liquor distilled by licensees at outstills being very cheap, and the pass rules enabling Marias fairly easily to get an adequate supply of the spirit for the religious and domestic or social occasions at which its consumption is obligatory. The State does not tax the tapping of the sago-palm and toddy-palm, but merely tries to prohibit the sale and to limit the quantity of the resulting spirit which individuals may possess.

Mahua

The Parjas and Bison-horn Marias sometimes make a wine from *mahua*, said to be red in colour, by several successive boilings and strainings of *mahua* flowers. It is called *surum*; I have never been able to get hold of any.

Landa, a cause of half the homicide committed in Bastar, is the favourite intoxicant of the Bison-horn Marias, but is taboo to the Hill Maria. It is made of equal portions of husked rice or *kuthi* and *mandia* (*Eleusine coracana*). The rice or *kuthi* is soaked well in water, strained off and pounded to a paste. The *mandia* grain is first damped and allowed to sprout, then dried in the sun for three or four days, and soaked, strained and pounded like the rice or *kuthi*. Both are then well mixed. They then take an earthenware *handi*, with holes in the bottom, and cover the holes with a lattice of bamboo slices, on which they place *siari* leaves. The mixed rice or *kuthi* and sprouted *mandia* are piled on these leaves. The *handi* is then placed on a *handi* of

Landa

[see cat. 116 | p. 421. – Neal 73]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

326 564 cultivators. In some cases they had obtained cultivators' daughters as wives; but these appeared all to be run-away matches without the consent of the girls' parents; in other cases cultivators had become blacksmiths in order to marry blacksmiths' daughters. Halba and Telanga neighbours refer to them often as Kammar by caste; but so far as the word can be used of them, it is clearly rather an occupational term. Yet for some reason the aboriginal everywhere looks down on the smith, and as soon as a Maria takes to this occupation he must live with his fellow-smiths either in a separate village or hamlet, or segregated in a separate part of the village.

[135] 326 316 423 Almost all parts of Bastar are full of iron ore, some of it among the finest and purest in the world. But the Maria smiths cannot deal in their rough smelting furnaces with anything but the friable haematite ores, yellow ochre in colour, which they either collect where it lies in exposed lumps or dig from shallow hillside pits. As the ore is a part of the soil, and the soil is the property of the clan-priest vested in the *kasyaq-gaita* of a Hill Maria or the *perma* of a Bison-horn village, the chief of the smiths has to ask the permission of the *kasyaq-gaita* or *perma* to dig ore just as the relatives of a man of another clan dying in the village have to ask his permission to bury the man in the clan-earth. The smiths have generally to pay for this permission by contributing a sacrificial pig at the annual harvest-home festival of the clan-god; and at this festival the smiths pray to the clan-god to give them good iron in the coming year. If smelting produces bad iron, witchcraft is at once suspected, and a medium consulted. Men, women and children mine or collect the ore, which is soft enough to be dug easily with the ordinary hoe, and broken up with the blunt end of the pointed hammer (*mutti*) used by all Maria smiths. It may be added here that they get an annual fee in grain at harvest from all Maria villagers, in return for which they are expected to sharpen, re-temper or repair tools and weapons, and a fee, generally in grain, for all new tools and weapons. They also manufacture for direct sale in the markets.

[754]

325 Having collected the ore, the smith collects a supply of bark for roasting the ore before smelting, and makes a supply of charcoal (*bugi*). For the former purpose he prefers the bark of the sacred *saja* tree, and the roasting changes the colour of the ore from yellow ochre to deep burnt sienna. For smelting he makes charcoal from *karra* wood, unless he can get tamarind, and for refining from *mahua* wood. It takes two or three men a day to cut the wood; they use green *karra* logs eighteen inches or two feet in girth, and dead *mahua* wood. They cut up the *karra* into billets about eighteen inches long,

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

Mother Earth. The Gaita offered eggs and chickens, first making the chickens eat the rice and then killing them. The juice in the leaf-cups was offered to the Earth Mother and the Kanyang and then everyone drank a little. After this the owner was free to tap the tree in the ordinary way.

Failure of the sago-palm may be due either to black magic and witchcraft or to the hostility of one of the Gorga Kanyang. The Kanyang, if she is not happy in a particular village, may twist the branches at the top of the tree and cause them to wither. It is generally believed that the tree gives juice for three years 'just as a girl can enjoy herself for three years protected by Lingo in the ghotul. Then she marries and the juice ceases to flow. The motiari of the palm tree is afraid of marrying too soon. If we touch the tree with a cloth yellowed by haldi it will stop giving juice till the new shoots come, for the shadow of haldi (that is, of marriage) is upon it.'

For gonorrhoea, a very rare disaster among these aboriginals, the sufferer stands below holding a leaf-cup into which a friend pours a little of the juice from the top of the tree. The patient offers a few drops to the Gorga Kanyang and then drinks it without allowing it to touch the ground.

The wood of the palm is not usually used for building in Bastar but the Hill Maria make their *turam* drums out of its hollow dried-up trunk. The Muria also make combs and drum-sticks out of the dry wood. Some of the Muria in the Abujhmar foothills make necklaces of the fibre. The leaves are often used as hair-ornaments or to decorate the village dormitories. Sometimes the flowers are pounded into flour, mixed with water and drunk as a sort of gruel. When it is evident that the tree will give no more juice, it is cut down and the pith is removed. This is pounded into a sort of flour and steamed in the usual way into cakes which are popular eaten with honey or sugar. This practice is common across the whole of the sago-palm country. I have found it among Hill Maria, Bondo, Gadaba, and Juang and it has been recorded for the Kadir and Khasi.[1]

The salphi juice is either brought back to the house and stored there until by fermentation it becomes much more intoxicating than in its fresh condition or it is drunk immediately at the foot of the tree. Little groups of people, generally men, go out to the trees, taking with them roasted crabs or frogs, little bits of chicken, various kinds of chutney, carefully wrapped in leaf-cups. The liquor is drunk from leaves, generally simply folded to make a sort of cup, and it is sometimes poured direct into the mouth. Many delightful hours are thus spent by the villagers out among the woods or on the hills.

When a tree is specially planted by seeds or cuttings it is very carefully tended. A fence of wood is built round it and it is watered regularly. Sometimes a tree is associated with the memory of a particular person. In Kanhargaon, a village in the Chota Dongar area, a Muria planted salphi and mango trees fifty years ago and they still preserve his memory. When the people go in the evening to drink the juice, they offer a few drops in the name of Tallur Muttai and Kadrengal to the sago-palm and a few drops in the name of the dead man who planted the trees to the mango, 'so that as we drink you can drink also'.

Generally speaking the tree belongs to the man in whose field or garden it is growing. Where the trees are out in the jungle, or standing in the common land of the village, disputes sometimes arise. The headman or the more influential priests generally claim these trees as their own, but there is also a

[1] Thurston, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 171.; P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis* (London, 1914), p. 32. See also Grigson, op. cit., p. 152.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

custom that the man who goes to the trouble of tapping the tree, protecting it with thorns, and making a bamboo ladder, has a right over it, especially when it is growing far away in the forest. The trees are not taxed but the villagers are not allowed to sell the juice. Disputes simply arise over the right to take the liquor for personal use.

The salphi juice, however, is not generally so intoxicating as to cause quarrels in the same degree as landa rice-beer or mahua spirit. Bedford's *Technical Excise Manual* (par. 263) gives some account of the comparative alcoholic strengths of these drinks. 'The alcoholic strength of toddy varies according to the nature of the palm tapped, the season of the year, the time for which it has been drawn and other circumstances. The average results of a number of tests made with toddy from all parts of the Madras Presidency were:

		Percentage by Volume
Coconut ..	.. 85·7° U.P.	8·1
Palmyra ..	.. 90·8° U.P.	5·2
Date ..	.. 91·4° U.P.	4·9
Sago ..	.. 89·6° U.P.	5·9

Toddy exposed for sale in Bengal in 1909 was found generally to range in alcoholic strength from about 93° to 94° U.P. When reasonably fresh it has a food value somewhat comparable with that of well-made malt beer.' The average strength of landa rice-beer may be taken at about 85° U.P. (8·6% by volume). Mahua spirit is much stronger—*rasi* may be sold at strengths of 50° to 70° U.P. and *phuli* of 5° to 35° U.P. The average for *rasi* is 60° U.P. (22·8% by volume) and for *phuli* 25° U.P. (42·8%).

XIII

With all these varied economic and social activities how far do chelik and motiari meet one another during the day? Does tribal custom allow them to share the same tasks or are the functions of men and women sharply differentiated?

The girls, of course, have the major part of the house-work to see to. They cook, bring water, clean the buildings with cow-dung and whitewash, husk the grain, grind wheat or spices. They generally make the *masni* mats, tie grass into brooms, prepare leaf-plates and cups. In the house a woman must not climb on the roof and she must not take grain out of the dhusir grain-bin, although it may only be removed at her command. A motiari before the menarche may go into the room where the Pot of the Departed is kept, but not afterwards—for she is going to join another clan and has no part with these ancestors; her spirit will mingle with those of her husband's family.

The chelik, on the other hand, have comparatively little to do in the house. They may cook and bring water when the womenfolk are in their periods; they have the business of erecting the framework of the building which the girls will later plaster with mud, and they thatch the roof.

But their main work is outside. In male hands is all the business of the fields and forest. They make and use the ploughs; they cut wood for fuel or cultivation; they embank the fields; they tend the cattle, make and drive their carts; they go to hunt and fish; they watch the crops and thrash and winnow them.

Yet there remain many chances for sharing of labour between chelik and motiari. A boy does not always see his motiari in the dark. Both can repair